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THE PRESIDENT'S NEWS CONFERENCE OF FEBRUARY 6, 1969

SENTINEL ABM SYSTEM AND ARMS CONTROL TALKS

Q. Mr. President, the Pentagon announced this morning that Secretary Laird had ordered a temporary halt in the construction of the Sentinel system, pending a high level review. Does that represent a change in policy on our part? Does it indicate that maybe we are getting somewhere with the Russians toward an agreement whereby neither one of us would have to build it?

THE PRESIDENT. Well, Mr. Kaplow, answering the second part of your question first, there has been no progress with regard to the arms control talks with the Russians.

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to that position that we are going to put emphasis on those talks, but I do believe we should go forward on settling some of the political differences at the same time.

As far as the decision on the Sentinel is concerned, Secretary Laird and his colleagues at the Defense Department will make decisions based on the security of the United States, and he will announce those decisions and justify them at this point.

U.S. RELATIONS WITH ASIA

Q. Mr. President, there has been some apprehension, sir, in Asia that your reemphasis on U.S. relations with Europe would mean a lessening of U.S. interests in Asia. Would you comment on that, sir?

THE PRESIDENT. This gives me an opportunity to perhaps state my philosophy about emphasis on different parts of the world.

The reason that we have been discussing the Mideast a great deal lately is that it is an area of the world which might explode into a major war. Therefore, it needs immediate attention. That does not mean, however, that we are not going to continue to put attention on Latin America, on Africa, on Asia.

I think you could describe me best as not being a "half-worlder," with my eyes looking only to Europe or only to Asia, but one who sees the whole world. We live in one world and we must go forward together in this whole world.

NOT FOR ATTRIBUTION

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B A C K G R O U N D B R I E F I N G

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

**WITH DR. HENRY A. KISSINGER,
SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS;
AND RON ZIEGLER, PRESS SECRETARY
TO THE PRESIDENT**

5:45 P.M. EST

FEBRUARY 6, 1969

THURSDAY

Q Dr. Kissinger, the President spoke this morning about the possibility of four-power talks after he comes back from this trip, at various levels, looking toward a possible meeting with the Soviet Union. Could you give us a rundown on this?

DR. KISSINGER: The President has indicated all along that this is going to be an era, insofar as he can make it so, he would like it to be an era of negotiation rather than confrontation.

He also said, in relation with the strategic arms talks, that he will make a judgment depending on the general political progress that is made in other issues. For that reason, the Administration is going to be ready, after we have had a chance to talk to our European allies, to begin exploratory talks with the Soviet Union on a whole range of issues looking toward alleviating specific points of tension.

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I think his approach is going to be to concentrate on specific areas, as he pointed out this morning -- and I believe I know his views on this. He does not believe that these tensions that have lasted for 20 years are going to be fettered by one spectacular exercise in personal diplomacy, but that they require some patient, detailed preparation at lower levels and that they must be characterized by precision and attention to details. This may not be spectacular, but perhaps it is more permanent.

Q Can you tell us more about why the President wants to have strategic negotiations and political negotiations going forward on separately different facts?

DR. KISSINGER: I was lured here because I was told you all could hardly wait to hear me expound on the National Security Council system and my exerted influence on it.

To take the question of the linkage between the political and the strategic environment. We have come through two phases. In the 1950's, it used to be said that a political settlement had to precede an arms settlement. It was said that the arms race is the result of political tensions, not the cause of them, and, therefore, the way to deal with

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the problem of arms was to solve first all the political problems and then the arms would take care of themselves.

In reaction to that, they developed an arms control school which you and I participated in various stages as colleagues in which the argument used to be that the arms race portion was essentially autonomous with producing tension and in which the level of political tension was more or less irrelevant to what could be done in the arms field.

This led to about ten years of negotiations in the arms field which have had some successes, of which the Non-Proliferation Treaty is one, but during which, I think it is fair to say, that the level of arms has increased substantially, both quantitatively and qualitatively and the level of tension has also increased substantially.

Now, if you review the last 20 years and look at the incNo Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-431-2-2-8' I think it would be difficult to think of one that was caused by the general balance of arms. But it is possible to think of very many that were caused by the general balance of political relationships.

Therefore, the President's view is not that there must be a settlement of all political issues. He has emphatically rejected that in his press conference before this. His view is, if I understand it correctly, that there is a danger, that if arms control and political issues become too much disassociated that arms control may be used as a safety valve to make political conflict safer rather than eliminate political conflict.

He has, therefore, suggested that there be enough movement in the political field to indicate that the arms control negotiations do not unwittingly, instead of reducing the danger of war, offer a means by which political conflict can be intensified and yet managed. He is asking for enough movement, not to produce a final settlement, but to indicate that there is enough good faith in the direction of trying to reduce the intensity of political conflict.

In short, he would like to deal with the problem of peace on the entire front in which peace is challenged and not only on the military one.